

HELP



BY

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This new old house'

We bought an old house, my boyfriend and I. He's in charge of the "new" construction - converting the kitchen in to the master bedroom for instance, while I'm on wallpaper removal duty. The previous owner papered EVERY wall and CEILING! Removing it is brutal, but oddly satisfying. The best feeling is getting a long peel, similar to your skin when you're peeling from a sunburn. I don't know about you but I kinda make a game of peeling, on the hunt for the longest piece before it rips. Under a corner section of paper in every room is a person's name and a date. Curiosity got the best of me one night when I Googled one of the names and discovered the person was actually a missing person, the missing date matching the date under the wallpaper! The next day, I made a list of all the names and dates. Sure enough each name was for a missing person with dates to match. We notified the police who naturally sent out the crime scene team. I overheard one tech say "yup, it's human." Human? What's human?

"Ma'am, where is the material you

I hate it when my brother Charlie has to go
away

I hate it when my brother Charlie has to go
away. My parents constantly try to explain
to me how sick he is. That I am lucky for
having a brain where all the chemicals flow
properly to their destinations like undammed
rivers. When I complain about how bored I
am without a little brother to play with,
they try to make me feel bad by pointing
out that his boredom likely far surpasses
mine, considering his confine to a dark
room in an institution. I always beg for
them to give him one last chance. Of
course, they did at first. Charlie has been
back home several times, each shorter in
duration than the last. Every time without
fail, it all starts again. The neighbourhood
cats with gouged out eyes showing up in his
toy chest, my dad's razors found dropped
on the baby slide in the park across the
street, mom's vitamins replaced by bits of
dishwasher tablets. My parents are hesitant

'Guardians

He awoke to the huge, insect like creatures looming over his bed and screamed his lungs out. They hastily left the room and he stayed up all night, shaking and wondering if it had been a dream. The next morning, there was a tap on the door. Gathering his courage, he opened it to see one of them gently place a plate filled with fried breakfast on the floor, then retreat to a safe distance. Bewildered, he accepted the gift. The creatures chattered excitedly. This happened every day for weeks. At first he was worried they were fattening him up, but after a particularly greasy breakfast left him clutching his chest from heartburn, they were replaced with fresh fruit. As well as cooking, they poured hot steamy baths for him and even tucked him in when he went to bed. It was bizarre. One night, he awoke to gunshots and screaming. He raced downstairs to find a decapitated burglar being devoured by the insects. He was sickened, but disposed of the remains as

'Seeing Red (The First Day of School)

Everyone loves the first day of school, right? New year, new classes, new friends. It's a day full of potential and hope, before all the dreary depressions of reality show up to ruin all the fun. I like the first day of school for a different reason, though. You see, I have a sort of power. When I look at people, I can...sense a sort of aura around them. A colored outline based on how long that person has to live. Most everyone I meet around my age is surrounded by a solid green hue, which means they have plenty of time left. A fair amount of them have a yellow-orangish tinge to their auras, which tends to mean a car crash or some other tragedy. Anything that takes people "before their time" as they say. The real fun is when the auras venture into the red end of the spectrum, though. Every now and again I'll see someone who's basically a walking stoplight. Those are the ones who get murdered or kill themselves. It's such a rush to see them and know their time is

'They got the definition wrong'

It has been said that the definition of insanity is "doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results". I understand the sentiment behind the saying, but it's wrong. I entered the building on a bet. I was strapped for cash and didn't buy into the old legends of the hotel to begin with, so fifty bucks was more than enough to get me do it. It was simple. Just reach the top floor, the 45th floor, shine my flashlight from a window. The hotel was old and broken, including the elevator, so that meant hiking up the stairs. So up the stairs I went. As I reached each platform, I noted the old brass plaques displaying the floor numbers. 15, 16, 17, 18. I felt a little tired as I crept higher, but so far, no ghosts, no cannibals, no demons. Piece of cake. I can't tell you how happy I was as I entered that last stretch of numbers. I joyfully counted them aloud at each platform. 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 44. I stopped and looked back down the stairs. I must have miscounted, so

My Daughter Learned to Count

My daughter woke me around 11:50 last night. My wife and I had picked her up from her friend Sally's birthday party, brought her home, and put her to bed. My wife went into the bedroom to read while I fell asleep watching the Braves game. "Daddy," she whispered, tugging my shirt sleeve. "Guess how old I'm going to be next month." "I don't know, beauty," I said as I slipped on my glasses. "How old?" She smiled and held up four fingers. It is 7:30 now. My wife and I have been up with her for almost 8 hours. She still refuses to tell us where she got them.

Timekeeper

Timekeeper He had been given the watch on his tenth birthday. It was an ordinary grey plastic wristwatch in every respect except for the fact that it was counting down. "That is all of the time you have left in the world, son. Use it wisely." And indeed he did. As the watch ticked away, the boy, now a man, lived life to the fullest. He climbed mountains and swam oceans. He talked and laughed and lived and loved. The man was never afraid, for he knew exactly how much time he had left. Eventually, the watch began its final countdown. The old man stood looking over everything he had done, everything he had built. 5. He shook hands with his old business partner, the man who had long been his friend and confidant. 4. His dog came and licked his hand, earning a pat on the head for its companionship. 3. He hugged his son, knowing that he had been a good father. 2. He kissed his wife on the forehead one last

'There's no Reason to be Afraid'

When my sister Betsy and I were kids, our family lived for awhile in a charming old farmhouse. We loved exploring its dusty corners and climbing the apple tree in the backyard. But our favorite thing was the ghost. We called her Mother, because she seemed so kind and nurturing. Some mornings Betsy and I would wake up, and on each of our nightstands, we'd find a cup that hadn't been there the night before. Mother had left them there, worried that we'd get thirsty during the night. She just wanted to take care of us. Among the house's original furnishings was an antique wooden chair, which we kept against the back wall of the living room. Whenever we were preoccupied, watching TV or playing a game, Mother would inch that chair forward, across the room, toward us. Sometimes she'd manage to move it all the way to the center of the room. We always felt sad putting it back against the wall. Mother just wanted to be near us. Years

'The Perfect Plan'

On Monday, I came up with the perfect plan. No one even knew we were friends. On Tuesday, he stole the gun from his dad. On Wednesday, we decided to make our move during the following day's pep rally. On Thursday, while the entire school was in the gym, we waited just outside the doors. I was to use the gun on whoever walked out first. Then he would take the gun and go into the gym blasting. I walked up to Mr. Quinn the guidance counselor and shot him in the face three times. He fell back into the gym, dead. The shots were deafening. We heard screams in the auditorium. No one could see us yet. I handed him the gun and whispered, "your turn." He ran into the gym and started firing. I followed a moment after. He hadn't hit anyone yet. Kids were scrambling and hiding. It was mayhem. I ran up behind him and tackled him. We struggled. I wrenched the gun out of his hands, turned it on him, and killed him. I closed his mouth forever. On Friday, I was

'Warrior of god'

must have balance. Light and dark. Good and evil. Sound and silence. Without one, the other cannot exist." So if that's true, then God does NOTHING to fight evil?"

That might be your follow up question. Of course he fights evil. Relentlessly. I am

Dartalian, one of His most Holy and Righteous angels. I roam the Earth, disposing of evil wherever I find it. I kill the monsters you don't ever want to know about. I crush them completely so you can sleep at night.

You humans have no idea how many of you live because of the work I do." But what about Stalin? Hitler? Ted Bundy? Jack the

Ripper? "Well, those are the minor ones I had to let live. For balance. The ones I destroy aretoo horrible and vile to

survive. What's funny, is while I would wager you never have heard the name Dartalian in any religious texts, I bet you have heard of me. Americans, for example, have their own name for me. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

'Hell'

There was no pearly gate. The only reason I knew I was in a cave was because I had just passed the entrance. The rock wall rose behind me with no ceiling in sight. I knew this was it, this was what religion talked about, what man feared .. I had just entered the gate to hell. I felt the presence of the cave as if it was a living, breathing creature. The stench of rotten flesh overwhelmed me. Then there was the voice, it came from inside and all around. "Welcome" "Who are you?", I asked, trying to keep my composure. "You know", the thing answered. I did know. "You are the devil", I stuttered, quickly losing my composure. "Why me? I've lived as good as I could". The silence took over the space as my words died out. It seemed like an hour went by before the response came. "What did you expect?" The voice was penetrating but patient. "I don't know .. I never believed any of this", I uttered "Is that why I am here?" Silence. I continued: "They say the greatest trick you ever pulled

'The Accident'

It was one a.m. and Guy Halverson sat in his dark living room. He hadn't moved for over an hour. The accident earlier that evening kept playing over and over in his mind. The light turned red, but he was in a hurry and accelerated. An orange blur came from his right, and in a split second there was a violent jolt, then the bicyclist rolled across his hood and fell out of sight on the pavement. Horns blared angrily and he panicked, stepping on the gas and screeching away from the chaos into the darkness, shaken and keeping an eye on his rearview mirror until he got home. Why did you run, you idiot? He'd never committed a crime before this and punished himself by imagining years in jail, his career gone, his family gone, his future gone. Why not just go to the police right now? You can afford a lawyer. Then someone tapped on the front door and his world suddenly crumbled away beneath him. They found me. There was

'Next Time You'll Know Better'

Have you ever walked into a room and found a vampire? No, not the sexy kind, but a foul creature with bony limbs and ashen skin? The kind that snarls as you enter, like a beast about to pounce? The kind that roots you to the spot with its sunken, hypnotic eyes, rendering you unable to flee as you watch the hideous thing uncoil from the shadows? Has your heart started racing though your legs refuse to? Have you felt time slow as the creature crosses the room in the darkness of a blink? Have you shuddered with fear when it places one clawed hand atop your head and another under your chin so it can tilt you, exposing your neck? Have you squirmed as its rough, dry tongue slides down your cheek, over your jaw, to your throat, in a slithering search that's seeking your artery? Have you felt its hot breath release in a hiss against your skin when it probes your pulse—the flow that leads to your brain? Has its tongue rested there, throbbing slightly as if

'Hands'

The doctor pulled the stethoscope ear tips out and hung the device around his neck. "Mr. Weatherby, all of your tests have come back negative and my examination shows nothing abnormal." Adam knew what was coming next. "I'm not crazy, Doctor." "I'm sorry, but there is no physical reason for why you occasionally lose control of your hands. A psychologist can help..." "I don't need therapy. I need answers. They seem to have a life all their own. I can't hold a job. I'm under investigation for assault. I almost killed my neighbor. This can't go on. I'll try anything at this point." After two weeks on a new medication, Adam saw no progress and grew increasingly depressed. He was convinced that despite what the doctors said, it was not a psychological problem. That night, a frustrated and angry Adam sat in a chair and drank bourbon. Drunk and hopeless, he stumbled to the garage and started the table saw, then slowly lowered his wrists toward the screaming

'He Stood Against My Window'

I don't know why I looked up, but when I did I saw him there. He stood against my window. His forehead rested against the glass, and his eyes were still and light and he smiled a lipstick-red, cartoonish grin. And he just stood there in the window. My wife was upstairs sleeping, my son was in his crib and I couldn't move I froze and watched him looking past me through the glass. Oh, please no. His smile never moved but he put a hand up and slid it down the glass, watching me. With matted hair and yellow skin and face through the window. I couldn't do anything. I just stayed there, frozen, feet still in the bushes I was pruning, looking into my home. He stood against my window.

'Fallers'

People started falling from the sky by the close of the decade. They were never clothed, always naked, always a petrifying grin on their faces. It had been just a few at first, but then hundreds and thousands would fall at a time, destroying cars, homes, blocking off highways. Strange discoveries were made upon research; they were human, but lacked any blood, intestines, even a heart. No one could explain the hideous grins they had, or even where they came from. It was a woman in Costa Rica who made the latest and most disturbing discovery. She recognized one of the fallen bodies as a long dead relative, one who died back when she had been a teenager. Then more and more identifications were made. Soon people were picking out their long dead loved ones amongst the video feeds, cadaver piles, and crematoriums. No one could explain why they were coming back, falling from the sky. Even more distressing, after disposing

'The Happiest Day of My Life'

I watched as my soon to be father-in-law held his daughter's hand as he walked down the aisle. Tears streamed down his face as the wedding march that played in the background reminded him that, in a few minutes, he would be watching me hold his daughter's hand and slipping on her ring. He walked up to the altar and I took hold of her hand, grinning from ear to ear. It was the happiest day of my life. My bride's father got down on his knees and started begging. "Please, I did what you asked. Just please give my daughter back." I glare at him. "Shut up and stop ruining the moment. If you sit back down and enjoy the ceremony, maybe I'll tell you where I've hidden the rest of her body."

'Hidden'

Where are you?!" I scream. Panicked, I run through the abandoned farm. I can't find her. Not in the old house. Not in the barn. I run into the empty field, heart racing. As I scan the area, I run into a mound of dirt and trip, sprawling to the ground. Getting up, it hits me. Abandoned farm. I tripped over freshly tilled earth. Crouching down, I start frantically clawing with my hands. Scooping handfuls of dirt, I hit something hard. Wood. "Are you in there?!" I cry, pressing my ear to the wood. I hear muffled cries. I start digging again, but realize it's taking too long. Looking around, I see a garden shed. I sprint to it, ripping the door open. I see a shovel, still caked in dirt. Probably the same one that bastard buried her with. I grab it. Running back, I started digging with purpose. Soon the wooden box is exposed. I toss the shovel, and rip open the crate. She stares back at me, eyes wide. Bound. Gagged. But alive. I sigh with relief. Thank God. I reach into my bag, pulling out

'My Favorite Support Group'

Look, I'll be the first to admit I'm a complete bastard. I'm also lazy. I'm only here to find the idiot, because there's almost always an idiot. This support group is pretty typical. We connected online, decided on a quiet place, and now we're all sitting cross-legged in a circle. Real Kumbaya crap. Jerome takes the lead, pouring everyone a cup of tea as he starts talking. "I'm Jerome. You can drink your tea, but only after explaining why you're here. I'll start." Jerome tells us he's never been loved. I can see why—the guy's ugly as sin. He sips his tea while the mousy chick speaks next. "Miyu," she says. "My parents." Short and sweet, no blubbering. Gotta admire Miyu. She's probably not the idiot. Next to talk are a legless veteran, a broke businessman, a needle-tracked junkie, and a diseased old crone. Then it's my turn. "I'm an ass. Everyone hates me." I take a loud, annoying slurp of oolong as the

Little Emily vanished last year. Now they're pouring new sidewalks in my neighborhood, and I've found her name in the wet cement, written in remembrance. But it was written in reverse. And from below.

'The Eyes are Watching Me'

I bought a new house in the small town of Winthrop. The house was cheap, but the most important part was that I needed to get away from the city. A few months ago, I had a run-in with a stalker. While I had managed to get him arrested, I couldn't shake the feeling of eyes just constantly watching me. I felt like there were eyes everywhere, at home and on the street, so I decided to move out into the country to somewhere with less people, just for peace of mind. The house itself was big and somewhat old, but otherwise very welcoming. The agent who introduced me to the house had been required to mention that a serial killer had lived here in the past, which was why the house was so cheap. However, he, and later, my next door neighbor Sarah, both told me to pay no thought no mind. Four other owners had lived in the house since then, and all of them were very happy with it. I loved the

‘The twist at the end’

Cradling my four-year-old daughter in my arms, all I could do was listen as the screaming outside the house got louder and louder, interspersed with sounds of violence and horrible, horrible wet thuds and the unmistakable echo of muscle and sinew resisting the force that was slowly tearing them apart. It started just three days ago.

Something happened, out there in the world, and before we even get news of what’s going on, seemingly half of the world is gone. Police and military were unable to stop it, providing such a short frame of resistance it’s hard to know whether it was real or just a fluke. There was no centralised target, no way to use our most powerful weapons, not without incinerating ourselves in the process. They poured forth across the world, from wherever it was that it started. I hear banging on the door downstairs, and the screams of people being slaughtered, unable to mount a proper resistance against such a force. It doesn’t take long before the

Crying isn't going to help

I pointed the gun at the sick bastard who killed my wife. He sobbed as he feared for what was to come. I pulled the trigger. If only he spoke and tried to reason with me then maybe he could've lived. But that was obviously not going to happen. After all, he was born just a few minutes ago.

'Return of the Messiah'

In the year 2026 the Messiah came back down to Earth. She performed miracles and cured the sick. There was no doubt as to her authenticity. She appeared to all nations at once. All believed. All worshipped her.

Some time later, after this period of our history known as the Age of Peace, She dropped a bombshell on us. She warned us that Heaven was almost full. Nobody had gone to Hell during this Age. There were a fixed amount of spots left. Paradise would be closed to all who died after the Gates close.

That is when the Mass Suicides began. Taking your own life, She had told us, was not a sin if you died a pious man. The race was on!

She looked on and was pleased. She returned to her home, to her throne of fire and flames, and greeted all with a nod of

'The Enemy'

I flung myself through the door and vaulted over the toppled, long-dead refrigerator that served as an ineffective barricade in front of me. My legs propelled me through the room and into the small hallway on the other side. I couldn't stop to eat the expired contents of the fridge, appealing to me despite their stench after several days without food. The shrieks of pain and cries for mercy around me spurred my body onward and filled me with unexpected energy in spite of my hunger. We were at war. I came to a halt in front of a small bathroom. A noise. Something behind the shower curtain. My fear heightened and images of the enemy flooded my mind. Merciless beasts wearing human skin, devouring indiscriminately, accepting no pleas and respecting no argument. Zombies. It had begun as we expected, with a virus. The original infected were almost a cliché. There was no humanity left in them. Just mindless rage, twisted bodies, and

‘So I lost my phone...’

Last night a friend rushed me out of the house to catch the opening act at a local bar’s music night. After a few drinks I realized my phone wasn’t in my pocket. I checked the table we were sitting at, the bar, the bathrooms, and after no luck I used my friend’s phone to call mine. After two rings someone answered, gave out a low raspy giggle, and hung up. They didn’t answer again. I eventually gave it up as a lost cause and headed home. I found my phone laying on my night stand, right where I left it.

'The Brave Ones'

Here they come again, the brave ones. Another Halloween night, and the kids are back, here to prove their fearlessness. The old house's floorboards creak beneath their sneakers. Only half an hour until midnight, so I have to work fast. I start with their flashlight, blowing lightly against it, so that it flickers, but this inspires little more than a nervous giggle. Fifteen minutes until midnight. Time to take things up a notch. I hover up to the ceiling, and will my body into flesh. My every nerve is on fire, but they've given me no choice. I force drops of blood to trickle out my nose, but the boys below don't notice. I knock against the ceiling, but they won't even look up. "I thought this place was supposed to be haunted," says the leader. "What a joke." Five minutes until midnight. I'm running out of time. With the last of my strength, I scream—so loud that they finally turn to look up at me. I like to think I put

'Nap in the car'

Mommy always leaves me and daddy home on Saturday nights, and me and daddy always go get ice cream in the car after dinner. I have to sit in the back seat until I'm a big boy. I go in the kitchen to see what daddy is cooking for dinner after my Barney movie is over, but he's not in there this time. I saw a note on the counter that said mommy and uncle James were going somewhere together. I'm not sure, I don't read that good. I go find daddy in the garage. I shut the door behind me like I'm supposed to. Daddy is in the car and he already has the car turned on. We must not be eating dinner tonight, only ice cream. I get in the backseat behind daddy since I'm not a big boy yet. Daddy doesn't say anything when I said hello to him. Maybe he can't hear me over the loud car. I think I'll take a nap on the way to ice cream. I feel kinda sleepy.

What they don't tell you about the dead

I don't want to sound mean, but the dead are pretty clueless. I've always seen them. When I was younger everyone thought I was just talking to imaginary friends. After a couple years, when I overheard my parents talk about calling a psychologist, I realised what I was talking to. See, ghosts don't tend to realise they're dead, and they don't look like in the movies, they look just like us. I'm pretty smart for a 13 year old, so I started noticing certain patterns to tell them apart from the living. They could be a bit distant from living people, or you'd see them try to talk to people who wouldn't even notice them. Some of them could tell I was different, that I noticed them. Like this guy I saw after school yesterday. I'm a big boy now, see, I don't need my parents to pick me up, home is just a short walk away. He was standing away from the other parents, didn't talk to them, just stared at me, that's how I knew he was one of the ghosts. I went over, told him I knew what he was and asked how I could help him. I

A Message from your Personal Demons

Hello, my dear. You do not know who I am, but I know you. I am one of the three demons that were assigned to you at birth.

You see, some people in this world are destined for greatness, destined to live happy, fulfilling lives. You, I am afraid, are not one of those people, and it is our job to make sure of that. Who are we? Oh yes, of

course, how rude of me. Allow me to introduce us: Shame is my younger brother, the demon on your left shoulder. Shame tells you that you're a freak; that those thought you have are not normal; that you will never fit in. Shame whispered into your ear when your mother found you playing with yourself as a child. Shame is the one who makes you hate yourself. Fear sits on your right shoulder. He is my older brother, as old as life itself. Fear fills every dark corner with monsters, turns every stranger on a dark street into a murderer. Fear stops you from telling your crush how you feel. He tells you it is better not to try than let people see you fail. Fear makes you build



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